

**A) Amendments to the Claims:**

1. (currently amended)      Locking pliers comprising:

a stationary assembly having an elongated overall shape, wherein one end of said stationary assembly forms a stationary handle, and the other end of said stationary assembly forms a stationary jaw;

a moveable assembly including an operating lever and a moveable jaw that is supported on said stationary jaw via a first pivot;

said operating lever having a front end that is supported ~~directly~~ on said stationary jaw via a second pivot, and a rear end that forms a moveable handle;

a bias spring biasing said moveable handle away from said stationary handle;

said moveable assembly further including a link mechanism pivotally connected between said operating lever, said moveable jaw and said stationary handle and dimensioned whereby said moveable jaw is caused to close toward said stationary jaw from an open position to a closed position for clamping an item between said jaws when said moveable handle is moved toward said stationary handle to provide a past-dead-center locking toggle mechanism.

2. (original)      The locking pliers of claim 1, wherein said first pivot is a slidable pivot connection whereby said moveable jaw is permitted to close down on an object disposed between said jaws for providing self-adjustment of said jaws for different sized objects to be gripped between said jaws.

3. (currently amended) The locking pliers of claim 2, wherein said slidable pivot connection includes a spring biased pawl and ratchet mechanism with said pawl secured to said moveable jaw by said first pivot and moveable within a slot extending in said stationary jaw generally transversely to said jaws, said pawl having forwardly facing teeth for engaging a rack of teeth on a front edge of said slot for providing said ratchet, and a pawl spring connected between said pawl and said stationary assembly for maintaining said pawl teeth normally disengaged from said rack teeth.

4. (original) The locking pliers of claim 3, wherein said second pivot is a slidable pivot connection.

5. (currently amended) The locking pliers of claim 4, wherein said bias spring for biasing said moveable handle away from said stationary handle is comprised of a spring disposed between said stationary handle and the front end of said ~~second~~ link mechanism.

6. (currently amended) The locking pliers of claim 5, said link mechanism including a first link having a front end supported on said moveable jaw via a third pivot and a rear end supported on said operating lever via a fourth pivot at an intermediate point along said operating lever, and said rear end of said first link having a rearwardly extending protrusion extending beyond said fourth pivot, and a second link having a front end supported on said protrusion of said first link via a fifth pivot and a rear end supported on said stationary handle via a sixth pivot at a resting point that is adjustable along a length of said stationary handle, and stop means for preventing said toggle mechanism from going beyond a point of alignment past dead center upon movement of said

moveable handle toward said stationary handle, and a protrusion on the front end of said second link which is dimensioned for retaining an end of said bias spring at a position located in front of said fifth pivot in the open position and in rear of said fifth pivot in the closed position.

7. (currently amended) The locking pliers of claim 6, wherein said bias spring is a torsion spring.

8. (previously presented) The locking pliers of claim 6, wherein said sixth pivot is displaceable along said second link to two alternate positions for presetting said jaws for gripping larger or smaller objects.

9. (previously presented) The locking pliers of claim 6, wherein said stop means also prevents said toggle mechanism from going beyond a point of alignment past dead center upon movement of said moveable handle away from said stationary handle to the open position.

10. (original) The locking pliers of claim 1, wherein said second pivot is a slidable pivot connection.

11. (currently amended) The locking pliers of claim 1, wherein said bias spring for biasing said moveable handle away from said stationary handle is comprised of a spring disposed between said stationary handle and said link mechanism.

12. (original) The locking pliers of claim 11, wherein said spring is a torsion spring.

13. (currently amended) The locking pliers of claim 1, wherein the pivot connection of said link mechanism to said stationary handle is displaceable along said ~~second~~ link mechanism to two alternate positions for presetting said jaws for gripping larger or smaller objects.

14. (previously presented) The locking pliers of claim 1, including stop means for preventing said toggle mechanism from going beyond a point of alignment past dead center upon movement of said moveable handle toward or away from said stationary handle to the respective closed or open positions.

15. (previously presented) The locking pliers of claim 1, wherein the pivot connection of said link mechanism to said stationary handle is adjustable along a length of said stationary handle by means of a slide received in said stationary handle and which is displaceable with a thumb screw received in said stationary handle.

16. (original) Self-adjusting locking pliers comprising:

a stationary assembly having an elongated overall shape, wherein one end of said stationary assembly forms a stationary handle, and the other end of said stationary assembly forms a stationary jaw;

a moveable assembly including an operating lever and a moveable jaw that is supported on said stationary jaw via a first pivot which is comprised of a slidable pivot connection

whereby said moveable jaw is permitted to close down on an object disposed between said jaws for providing self-adjustment of said jaws for different sized objects to be gripped between said jaws;

said operating lever having a front end that is supported on said stationary jaw via a second pivot which is comprised of a slidable pivot connection, and a rear end of said operating lever that forms a moveable handle;

a spring biasing said moveable handle away from said stationary handle;

said moveable assembly further including a first link having a front end supported on said moveable jaw via a third pivot and a rear end supported on said operating lever via a fourth pivot at an intermediate point along said operating lever whereby said moveable jaw is caused to close toward said stationary jaw from an open position to a closed position for clamping an item between said jaws when said movable handle is moved toward said stationary handle, said rear end of said first link having a rearwardly extending protrusion extending beyond said fourth pivot, and a second link having a front end supported on said protrusion of said first link via a fifth pivot and a rear end supported on said stationary handle via a sixth pivot at a resting point that is adjustable along a length of said stationary handle, whereby said links provide a past-dead-center locking toggle mechanism;

a protrusion on the front end of said second link which is dimensioned for retaining an end of said spring at a position located in front of said fifth pivot in the open position and in rear of said fifth pivot in the closed position; and

stop means for preventing said toggle mechanism from going beyond a point of alignment past dead center upon movement of said moveable handle toward said stationary handle to the closed position, and for preventing said toggle mechanism from going beyond a point of

alignment past dead center upon movement of said moveable handle away from said stationary handle to the open position.

17. (original) The self-adjusting locking pliers of claim 16, wherein said sixth pivot is adjustable along a length of said stationary handle by means of a slide received in said stationary handle which is displaceable with a thumb screw threadably received in said stationary handle.

18. (original) The self-adjusting locking pliers of claim 17, wherein said sixth pivot is displaceable along said second link to two alternate positions for presetting said jaws for gripping larger or smaller objects.

19. (original) The self-adjusting locking pliers of claim 18, wherein said spring is a torsion spring.

20. (original) The self-adjusting locking pliers of claim 19, wherein said slidable first pivot connection includes a spring biased pawl and ratchet mechanism with said pawl secured to said moveable jaw by said first pivot and moveable within a slot extending in said stationary jaw generally transversely to said jaws, said pawl having forwardly facing teeth for engaging a rack of teeth on a front edge of said slot for providing said ratchet, and a spring connected between said pawl and said stationary assembly for maintaining said pawl teeth normally disengaged from said rack teeth.